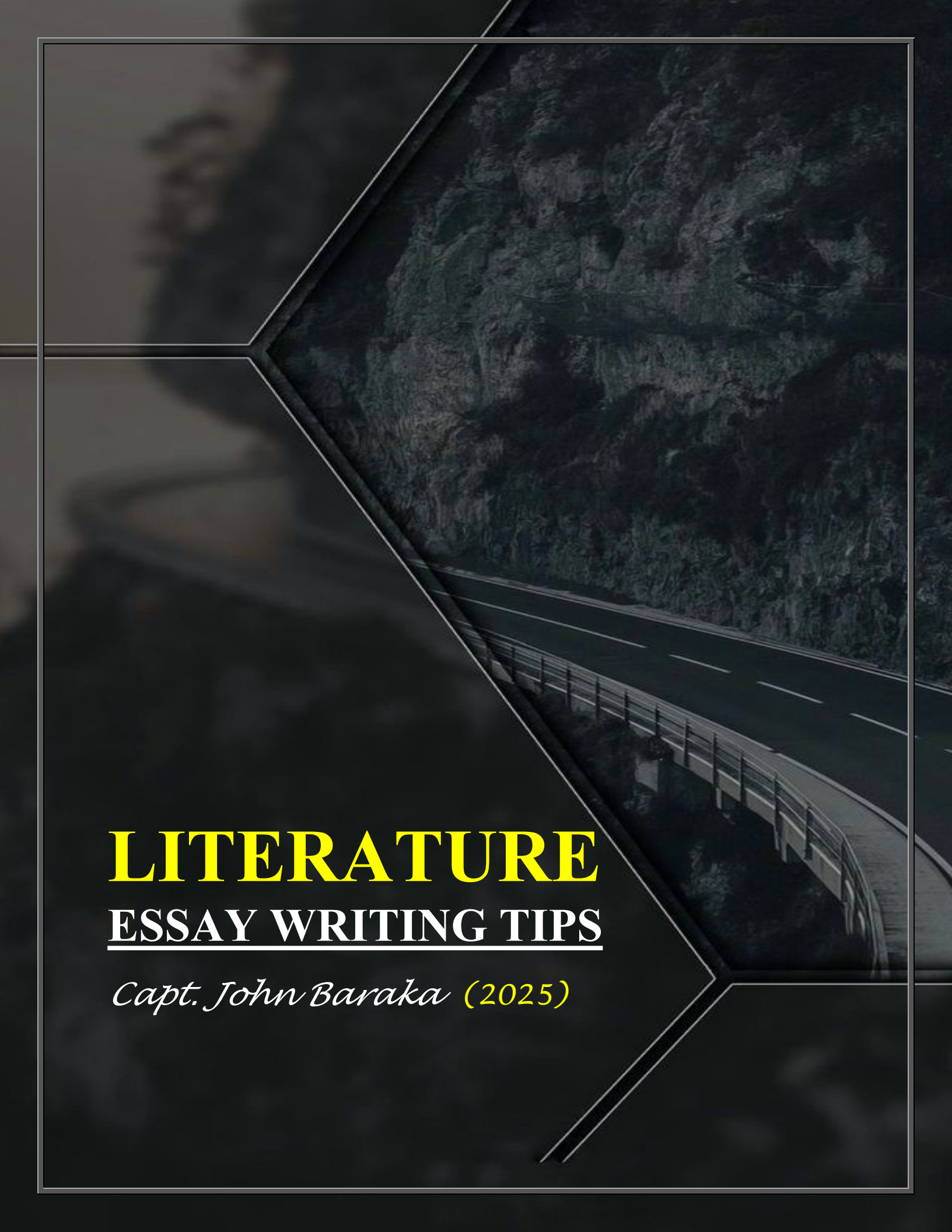

LITERATURE

ESSAY WRITING TIPS

Capt. John Baraka (2025)

CONTENTS

MODEL ESSAY (PROSE) 3
Essay Marking Guide....4
1. Introduction (1.5 Marks)....4
2. Body / Content (12 Marks) 5
3. Transitions....5
4. Conclusion (1.5 Marks) 5
5. Language Use....5
How to score higher marks in Section C 5
TOPIC SENTENCE....5
1. What is a Topic Sentence?....5
2. Why Topic Sentences Matter in Literature Essays....5
3. How to Write Effective Topic Sentences....6
4. Topic Sentence Tips for Students 6
5. Sample Topic Sentences in Literature Essays 6
(a) On Setting (like the essay we did earlier)....6
(b) On Position of Women....6
(c) On Conflict 6
(d) On Relevance of the Title....7
(e) On African Traditions and Customs....7
6. The PEEL method for paragraphs: 7
7. Sample Mini-Paragraph (with Topic Sentence)....7
8. Extra Training Strategies for Literature Essays....7
9. Extra Sample Topic Sentences: 7
TRANSITIONS 8
Common transition words/phrases:....8
1. Transition from Introduction → Main Body 8
2. Transition from One Book → Another....8
3. Transition from One Poem → Another 9
4. Transition between paragraphs within the same book....9
5. Transition into the Conclusion....9
Formula:....10
Example conclusion frames:....10
POETRY QUESTIONS....10

MODEL ESSAY (PROSE)

- **Question:** The setting of a piece of literature is the time and place in which the story takes place. What is happening in the story largely depends on its setting. In six points, verify this statement by referring to two novels you have read.

Setting in literature refers to the time and place in which the story occurs. It includes social customs, historical background, and geographical location. The setting is important because it influences characters, their conflicts, and the events of the plot. The statement that "what is happening in the story largely depends on its setting" is true. In this essay, reference will be made to The Concubine by Elechi Amadi, Houseboy by Ferdinand Oyono, and The Old Man and the Medal by Ferdinand Oyono.

Since The Concubine by Elechi Amadi presents a traditional African setting where culture and superstition dominate, it will be discussed first, followed by Oyono's Houseboy and The Old Man and the Medal, both of which present colonial settings in Cameroon.

The traditional Igbo setting promotes belief in superstition. The story is set in an Igbo community in Nigeria where people strongly believe in supernatural forces. This setting explains the tragedy of Ihuoma, who is believed to be a spirit wife. Characters such as the village dibia (medicine man) Anyika confirm these beliefs, showing how setting shapes their worldview.

The rural setting influences gender roles and marriage practices. Women in the village are expected to marry and bear children, while men provide protection and wealth. Ihuoma's beauty and obedience make her desirable in this cultural setting, but the same traditions make her vulnerable when her suitors die mysteriously.

The agrarian lifestyle shapes community conflicts. Farming, hunting, and fishing are central to survival in the village. Conflicts arise, such as Ekwueme's struggle with tradition when he is expected to marry Ahurole instead of Ihuoma, showing how social customs tied to the rural setting shape personal destinies.

The traditional rural setting intensifies the theme of fate versus human effort. Because the community is dominated by traditional beliefs, characters like Ihuoma cannot escape destiny. Her tragic life is explained within the framework of her village setting, where fate is stronger than individual choice.

While "The Concubine" portrays a traditional rural society shaped by African customs and beliefs, Ferdinand Oyono's Houseboy presents a colonial setting where Africans live under the oppression and exploitation of Europeans.

The colonial setting exposes racial discrimination. The novel is set in French Cameroon during colonial rule. Toundi, the houseboy, is constantly humiliated because of his skin color. For example, he is called "a monkey" by the colonial masters, showing how racism stems directly from the colonial setting.

The urban colonial environment promotes hypocrisy. The European rulers, especially the Commandant and his wife, pretend to be civilizing Africans while in reality they exploit them. The setting reveals the double standards of colonialism, where Africans are treated as servants but are still expected to respect their masters.

The political setting leads to exploitation and oppression. Toundi becomes a victim of colonial exploitation when he works tirelessly for the Commandant but receives no dignity or rights. The police and administrators use the setting of colonial law to intimidate and brutalize Africans.

The colonial setting causes Toundi's suffering and death. Because Cameroon is under colonial rule, Africans like Toundi have no justice. When he is accused of being Sophie's accomplice and theft, he is imprisoned, tortured, and eventually dies. His tragic end is a direct product of the colonial setting.

Just as "Houseboy" portrays the colonial injustices of Cameroon, Oyono's The Old Man and the Medal also presents the colonial setting, but this time through the experiences of an elder who is deceived by colonial promises of recognition.

The colonial setting creates false hope among Africans. The novel is set in Cameroon during French colonial rule. Meka, the old man, believes that receiving a medal from the French government is an honor. This hope is possible only because of the colonial setting, which deceives Africans into believing in false rewards.

The colonial setting reveals the betrayal of Africans. Meka is invited to a colonial ceremony but instead of being honored, he is humiliated. The French use the ceremony to showcase loyalty while secretly mocking Africans. This setting exposes the emptiness of colonial promises.

The religious setting enforces colonial control. Missionaries use Christianity to make Africans obedient to colonial rule. Meka gives land for the building of a church, believing he is serving God, but in reality he is serving the interests of colonialism.

The colonial setting shows the conflict between tradition and colonialism. While Meka values respect for elders and traditions, the colonial environment undermines these values. His humiliation at the hands of the French reveals how colonial settings destroy African dignity.

In conclusion, the setting of a piece of literature is indeed fundamental in shaping what happens in a story. In The Concubine, the traditional Igbo setting of superstition and fate leads to the tragic destiny of Ihuoma. In Houseboy, the colonial setting explains Toundi's suffering under exploitation, hypocrisy, and racial discrimination. In The Old Man and the Medal, the colonial setting creates false hopes and humiliations for Meka. Therefore, it is clear that setting is not just a background in literature but a driving force that determines the actions of characters, the conflicts they face, and the outcomes of their lives.

Essay Marking Guide

1. Introduction (**1.5 Marks**)
   - Definition of terms: The student should define setting (time, place, cultural or social background).
   - Relevance or link to the question: State that setting influences events, characters, and conflicts.
   - Books to be used (Reference): Mention the two novels to be used plus their authors.
   - Clarity: Smooth expression (grammar, neatness).

2. Body / Content (**12 Marks**)
This is the core of the essay.

- Six (6) valid points needed (3 from each book).
- **0.5 marks** per point + **1 mark** for relevant explanation and examples including (textual support e.g., naming characters like Ihuoma, Toundi, Meka) as well as citing events (e.g., Toundi's false accusation, Meka's humiliation at the medal ceremony). Without examples or textual support or citations, marks are capped at average.
- Topic sentences (**0.5 marks**). Each point must begin with a clear topic sentence (e.g., "The colonial setting leads to racial discrimination in Houseboy.").
- If points are jumbled or unclear, marks are reduced.

3. Transitions
Smoothly move from one book to another. (e.g., "While Amadi presents a rural setting, Oyono shows colonial Cameroon in Houseboy…").

4. Conclusion (**1.5 Marks**)

- Must restate the question (e.g., setting determines events).
- Must summarize each novel briefly.
- Must end powerfully (e.g., general truth about setting). Never leave the essay open-ended — always wrap up strongly.

5. Language Use

- Clear English, proper grammar, good paragraphing.
- Coherent flow from intro → body → conclusion.
- No SMS-style writing or bulleting (NECTA punishes this).
- Students should write full sentences, avoid slang, and vary vocabulary.

How to score higher marks in Section C
1. Give relevant and powerful six points.
2. Balance the books (not 4 points from one book and only 2 from another).
3. Always name characters/events — NECTA wants proof you've read the books.
4. Keep handwriting neat & paragraphs clear.
5. Intro and conclusion must look exam-ready (don't just jump into points).

TOPIC SENTENCE

1. What is a Topic Sentence?
A **topic sentence** is the first sentence in a paragraph that states the **main idea** of that paragraph.

- It tells the reader **what the paragraph will discuss**.
- It **connects to the question** being answered.
- It should **point to the book, character, theme, or device** you are using as evidence.
- In literature essays, a good topic sentence answers: **"What am I going to prove in this paragraph?"**

2. Why Topic Sentences Matter in Literature Essays

- They **guide the examiner** through your argument.
- They help you **stay relevant to the question**.
- They make your essay **organized and logical**.

- NECTA marking rubrics value **clarity and coherence** — strong topic sentences help secure marks.

3. How to Write Effective Topic Sentences

- Refer to the demand of the question
- Introduce the idea of the paragraph
- Link it to the text/character.
- Link to the question – echo key words from the exam question to stay focused.
- Be clear and direct – avoid storytelling; state the point first.
- Be argumentative – show that you are "proving" something, not just narrating.
- Be concise – one or two lines is enough, then you expand with evidence.
- Logical order – points should follow a flow (e.g., from general to specific, or from major to minor).

Example structure:

- *"The setting in **The Concubine** reveals the dominance of traditional beliefs, especially the fear of spirits, which influences the fate of characters like Ihuoma."*

4. Topic Sentence Tips for Students

- **Tip 1:** *Underline key words* in the question (e.g., "conflict," "tradition," "title"). The topic sentence must respond to those words.
- **Tip 2:** Avoid vague starts like *"In the book…"* Instead, begin with a clear claim.
- **Tip 3:** Each topic sentence should be followed by **evidence** (characters, incidents, quotes if possible). Even if not directly quoting, students should mention the book and characters.
- **Tip 4:** Encourage variety. If one topic sentence begins with *"The setting shows…"*, the next could start with *"Another important aspect is…"*
- **Tip 5:** No new point without a topic sentence.

5. Sample Topic Sentences in Literature Essays

(a) On Setting (like the essay we did earlier)

1. *"The rural village setting in **The Concubine** highlights the role of superstition and traditional beliefs in shaping human destiny."*
2. *"In **Houseboy**, the colonial urban setting exposes Toundi to exploitation, racism, and hypocrisy of European masters."*
3. *"The setting of **The Old Man and the Medal** reflects the false promises of colonial rulers, leading Meka to humiliation and betrayal."*

(b) On Position of Women

1. *"In **The Concubine**, Amadi presents women as vulnerable to patriarchal traditions, as seen in Ihuoma's tragic fate."*
2. *"In **Houseboy**, women such as Madame and Sophie are portrayed as objects of exploitation, reflecting gender inequality under colonialism."*

(c) On Conflict

1. *"The central conflict in **The Concubine** arises between human desires and supernatural forces, leading to tragedy."*
2. *"In **Houseboy**, the conflict is between colonial masters and the oppressed Africans, symbolized by Toundi's suffering."*

(d) On Relevance of the Title

1. *"The title **Houseboy** is relevant because it reflects Toundi's identity and his position of servitude under colonial rule."*
2. *"The title **The Concubine** captures Ihuoma's role in the society, whose relationships with men end tragically due to supernatural forces."*

(e) On African Traditions and Customs

1. *"Amadi's **The Concubine** highlights African traditions such as belief in spirits, arranged marriages, and communal living."*
2. *"Oyono's **Houseboy** contrasts African customs with European colonial practices, showing the erosion of native values."*

6. The PEEL method for paragraphs:

- **P**oint → topic sentence
- **E**vidence → examples from the book (characters/events)
- **E**xplanation → why the example supports the point
- **L**ink → back to the question

7. Sample Mini-Paragraph (with Topic Sentence)

- **Question**: "Examine how traditions affect characters in the novel **The Concubine**."

Paragraph:

- In The Concubine, traditions control individual choices, particularly in marriage. For example, Ihuoma is admired by many men, yet her fate is tied to the belief that she is possessed by a sea spirit, which brings death to her suitors. Ekwueme, despite his love for her, is forced to marry another woman due to these traditions. This shows how African customs in the village setting deny people the freedom to choose partners, proving that tradition has a powerful influence on the characters.

8. Extra Training Strategies for Literature Essays

- Outline first: Make 6–8 bullet points before writing.
- Use connectors: (Firstly, In addition, On the other hand, Moreover, Therefore) to guide the examiner.
- Underline book titles when handwriting (e.g., **The Concubine**).
- Balance points: At least 3 points from each book (NECTA requires this).
- Time practice: Finish a 15-mark essay in 20 minutes maximum.

9. Extra Sample Topic Sentences:

(a) Novels - **Question**: "Conflicts are central to any literary work. Discuss."

- The Concubine portrays conflicts between traditional beliefs and personal happiness through the struggles of Ihuoma.
- In Houseboy, Oyono shows the conflict between the colonial masters and Africans through the suffering of Toundi.
- In The Old Man and the Medal, the conflict between illusion and reality is revealed when Meka's loyalty to the whites earns him only humiliation.

(b) Plays - **Question**: "Comment on the position of women in society as clearly shown in plays."

- In The Lion and the Jewel, Soyinka presents women as objects of male desire through the character of Sidi.
- Aidoo in The Dilemma of a Ghost shows women as custodians of tradition through the role of Eulalie and Ato's mother.

(c) Poetry - **Question**: "Discuss how poetry reflects the realities of society."

- In Building the Nation by Henry Barlow, the poem highlights the exploitation of workers by leaders.

TRANSITIONS

Transitions are bridges that connect one part of an essay to the next. They guide the examiner smoothly through the answer instead of leaving it disjointed.

Common transition words/phrases:

- To begin with, Firstly, In addition, Moreover, Another example is, On the other hand, However, In the same way, Unlike, Similarly, Finally, To sum up, In conclusion, Therefore…

1. Transition from Introduction → Main Body

At the end of the introduction, you must signal that you are about to begin your arguments. This avoids the essay looking like the introduction and body are separated islands.

- Use linking words like: To begin with, In the first place, Firstly, The first novel to be examined is…
- Mention the title of the first book and its author.
- Give a short phrase about why you are starting with that book.

Example Transitions

- "To begin with, the first novel to be examined is **The Concubine** by Elechi Amadi, which clearly shows how setting influences the destiny of its characters."
- To begin with, I will start by discussing Elechi Amadi's novel **The Concubine**, which clearly shows how setting influences the events of the story.
- I shall first examine Ferdinand Oyono's **Houseboy**, before moving to other works, to see how society and setting shape the lives of the characters.

2. Transition from One Book → Another

When moving from one novel/poem/play to another, you need to close the discussion of the first book and open the door to the next.

- End the last point of the first book with a summarizing line.
- Use linking phrases like:
    a. Moving on,
    b. In addition,
    c. Apart from this,
    d. Similarly,
    e. On the other hand,
    f. Shifting focus to another novel,
    g. Another text that demonstrates this is…

- Immediately introduce the next book with author and a short context.

Example Transitions

- "From the above discussion, it is clear that the setting in The Concubine plays a vital role in shaping the life of Ihuoma and other villagers. Moving on, the second novel to be discussed is Houseboy by Ferdinand Oyono, which also portrays how the colonial setting influences Toundi's suffering and eventual death."
- Having seen how setting influenced the events in The Concubine, it is now important to turn to Ferdinand Oyono's Houseboy which also demonstrates how colonial society shaped Toundi's life.
- Moving from Nigeria to Cameroon, Oyono's novel The Old Man and the Medal further portrays how setting affects events, especially through the humiliations faced by Meka.
- On the other hand, in poetry, the poem **"**Building the Nation**"** by Henry Barlow equally reflects how the setting of post-colonial Africa brings about hypocrisy and inequality.

3. Transition from One Poem → Another

Since poems are shorter, transitions must be sharp and precise.

- Mention a connecting theme or contrast.
- Use phrases like: In the same way, Unlike this, Another poem which conveys a similar idea is…

Example Transition

- "While the poem Building the Nation criticizes selfish leaders, another poem, Eat More, exposes the greed of the political class and its consequences on ordinary citizens."

4. Transition between paragraphs within the same book

Students must show logical movement of ideas, not random jumping.

- Use connectives at the start of topic sentences: Firstly, Secondly, Moreover, In addition, Another example, Finally.
- Make sure the new point grows naturally out of the previous one.

Example Transitions

- "Secondly, the setting also shapes the villagers' fear of the supernatural, as seen when everyone believes Ihuoma is cursed."
- Another example from The Concubine is when…
- In addition, the setting of the village allows…
- Moreover, Ihuoma's tragedy shows that…
- Equally important, the belief in supernatural forces…

5. Transition into the Conclusion

The conclusion must look like a "landing point," not another point of argument.

- Use phrases like: In conclusion, To sum up, From the discussion above, Generally, It is therefore evident that…
- Restate the key argument (without repeating word-for-word).
- Tie together the books/poems/plays used.
- End powerfully. Leave a final thought (universal idea, moral, or relevance to real life).

Example Conclusion
"In conclusion, the discussion of The Concubine, Houseboy, and The Old Man and the Medal has proven that setting is a powerful force in literature. It determines the fate of characters, shapes conflicts, and mirrors society's struggles. Therefore, it is evident that the time and place in which a story is set are inseparable from what happens in the story."

Tips for Students

- Always signal movement → show markers when changing from intro → body, point → point, book → book, and body → conclusion.
- Avoid abrupt jumps → never just start with "In Houseboy…" without closing the previous text.
- Balance length → transitions should be 1–2 lines, not too long.

NECTA expects a short, powerful conclusion that:
1. Restates the question.
2. Summarizes key points.
3. Gives a final judgment.

Formula:

- Restate → From the discussion above, it is clear that…
- Summarize → The setting in The Concubine, Houseboy, and The Old Man and the Medal directly shapes characters' lives and events.
- Final comment → Therefore, one cannot separate the success of these works from their cultural and historical backgrounds.

Example conclusion frames:

- In conclusion, it is clear that the setting is the backbone of every story. In The Concubine, it is the traditional beliefs that destroy Ihuoma; in Houseboy, it is the colonial setting that crushes Toundi; and in The Old Man and the Medal, it is the French colonial system that humiliates Meka. Therefore, we can confidently say that what happens in literature is always a product of its setting.

- To sum up, whether we read African novels, plays, or poems, we find that the time and place strongly influence the actions of characters. Thus, the statement that "what is happening in a story largely depends on its setting" has been fully justified.

POETRY QUESTIONS

Tips for students on how to get Grade A:

1. **Read the question carefully**: Underline key instruction words like "discuss," "explain," "how," "with examples," etc. Answer exactly what is asked.
2. **Plan your essay**: Jot down 6-8 main points you will discuss. This gives your essay structure and prevents repetition.
3. **Introduction is the key**: Start by defining key terms from the question, state the purpose of your essay, and name the poems you will use.
4. PEEL method for body paragraphs:
    - **Point**: Start with a clear topic sentence that states your argument.

- **Evidence**: Provide a centered quotation from the poem as proof. This is crucial for high marks.
- **Explanation**: Analyze the quotation. How does it prove your point? Discuss diction, imagery, figures of speech.
- **Link**: Briefly connect your point back to the main question.

5. **Use formal language**: Avoid slang. Use terms like "the poet depicts," "the persona illustrates," "this symbolizes."
6. **Conclusion**: Do not introduce new points. Summarize your main arguments and provide a final, powerful statement that answers the question.
7. **Manage your time**: Aim for one well-developed point every 3-4 minutes.

Question: Discuss the themes of disappointment and betrayal as portrayed in two poems you have studied. Show how these themes are relevant to contemporary Tanzanian society.

- *The following is a model essay for training purposes. It's not a complete piece. Check for missing parts and fix them accordingly to produce a fantastic essay.*

A theme is the central, underlying idea or message that a writer explores in a literary work. Disappointment arises when one's hopes are not met, while betrayal is the breaking of trust by someone expected to be loyal. These themes are powerfully explored in poetry to critique social structures and individual failings. This essay will discuss how the themes of disappointment and betrayal are portrayed in "The Awful Dentist" by Jwani Mwaikusa and "A Freedom Song" by Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, and their stark relevance to modern Tanzania.

"The Awful Dentist" masterfully portrays societal disappointment through the metaphor of an incompetent professional. The community places its hope in a highly qualified dentist, expecting him to solve their dental problems. Their raised hopes are met with crushing disappointment when he destroys instead of heals.

"They brought him all the teeth they had --
Decaying teeth, aching teeth, strong teeth.
And he started working on their jaws
Diligently pulling out every tooth"

This citation shows the diversity of the community's problems, from severe to minor. The irony of the word "diligently" underscores the betrayal; he works hard, but at the wrong task. The disappointment is absolute, as he leaves them toothless and incapable of eating the meat they pay him with. This mirrors the disappointment citizens feel towards leaders and professionals who fail to deliver on their promises, prioritizing personal gain over public service.

Similarly, the theme of disappointment is not just societal but deeply personal and tragic, as seen in the exploitation of a young girl called Atieno in "A Freedom Song."

In "A Freedom Song," the theme of disappointment is intertwined with familial betrayal. Atieno is betrayed by her own uncle, the very person entrusted with her care. He disappoints her by denying her childhood, education, and basic dignity, leading to her ultimate disappointment: a tragic death from a teenage pregnancy. The uncle's justification for his exploitation is a profound betrayal of kinship.

"Since she is my sister's child
Atieno needs no pay"

These lines reveal the uncle's warped logic. Instead of family bond guaranteeing better care, it becomes an excuse for unpaid labour and neglect. The poet's use of a light, rhythmic refrain "Atieno yo" contrasts bitterly with the heavy subject matter, emphasizing how her suffering is trivialized. This depicts a deep betrayal of trust, where a caregiver becomes an oppressor.

These themes are painfully relevant to Tanzania today. The disappointment in "The Awful Dentist" reflects public frustration with graduates who have paper qualifications but lack practical skills and ethics, failing to solve national problems like healthcare and infrastructure. The betrayal in "A Freedom Song" is seen in cases of child labor, often by relatives, and the exploitation of domestic workers. The neglect leading to Atieno's early pregnancy mirrors the ongoing crisis of teen pregnancies and child marriages, where society betrays its girls by failing to protect and educate them.

In conclusion, both Mwaikusa and Macgoye use their poetry as a social mirror. They vividly portray how disappointment stems from the failure of entrusted individuals, and how betrayal by those in positions of power or familial trust can have devastating consequences. The enduring power of these poems lies in their continued relevance, urging Tanzanian society to demand accountability from its leaders and to protect and nurture its most vulnerable members, especially children.

Question: With reference to two poems, analyze how poets use irony and satire to communicate their messages. How effective are these devices in criticizing social ills?

- (Suggested Poems: "Building the Nation" by Henry Barlow & "The Awful Dentist" by Jwani Mwaikusa)

(Follow the same essay structure. Key points for the body):

- Point 1 (Irony in Title - "Building the Nation"): The title is deeply ironic. The PS attends a "luncheon" calling it an "important urgent function" and "matters of state." The poet satirizes leaders who misuse public funds for personal luxury under the guise of national duty.

  "To an important urgent function
  In fact, to a luncheon at the Vic."

- Point 2 (Satire in Dialogue - "Building the Nation"): The conversation between the PS and driver is satirical. The PS complains of ulcers from "sumptuous lunches" while the driver's ulcers are "caused by hunger." The PS's statement, "The pains we suffer in building the nation!" is a sharp satire on the hypocrisy of the elite.
- Point 3 (Situational Irony - "The Awful Dentist"): The core situation is ironic. A dentist, trained to save teeth, destroys them all. He "graduated with honours" but is utterly incompetent. This satirizes an education system that produces graduates who cannot solve practical community problems.

  "And graduated with honours
  With new thesis
  To cure the aching malady."

- Point 4 (Effectiveness): These devices are highly effective. Instead of direct accusation, they use humor, exaggeration, and contradiction to expose foolishness and corruption.

This makes the criticism more memorable and powerful, allowing readers to see the absurdity of the social ills themselves.

Question: Using two poems, examine how poets depict poverty and its devastating effects on human life. What lessons can society learn from these depictions?

- (Suggested Poems: "The Dying Child" by Freeman Peter Lwamba & "Eat More" by Joe Corrie)

Key Points for Body:

- Point 1 (Physical Effects - "The Dying Child"): Poverty leads to severe malnutrition. The child is a physical portrait of poverty: "Thin and red, / Skinny and bald, /... Swollen stomach / Full of waste." Poverty distorts his very body and stunts his growth.
- Point 2 (Psychological Effects - "The Dying Child"): Poverty kills hope. The child's dream of carrying a gun is crushed by his mother's bleak reality: "You will never live to carry a gun / There is no meat for us." Poverty leads to despair and nihilism.
- Point 3 (Social Inequality - "Eat More"): Poverty is shown through class disparity. Slogans like "Eat more fruit!... more fish, more beef, more bread!" are for the wealthy. The persona, on unemployment pay, can only afford "Eat More Bloody Grass!" The anger in "bloody" highlights the frustration of being excluded.
- Point 4 (Lessons): Society must learn that poverty is not just a lack of money but a denial of basic human dignity and potential. It is a catalyst for violence ("a gun") and ill-health. Governments must create jobs and social safety nets, and communities must support each other to eradicate extreme poverty.

Question: A title often holds the key to understanding a poem. With specific reference to two poems, justify the relevance of their titles to the content.

- (Suggested Poems: "A Baby is a European" (Ewe) & "If We Must Die" by Claude McKay)

Key Points for Body:

- Point 1 ("A Baby is a European" - Metaphorical Title): The title is a metaphor, not a literal statement. Each stanza explains this comparison: the baby, like a European colonizer, rejects local food, language, and respect for elders ("He forces his will upon his parents"). The title perfectly captures the poem's critique of cultural alienation.
- Point 2 ("A Baby is a European" - Central Theme): The entire poem is an elaboration of this title. It defines the ways in which the "baby" behaves like a European, making the title a direct roadmap to the poem's theme of lost identity.
- Point 3 ("If We Must Die" - Motivational Title): The title presents a conditional statement that forms the poem's central argument. It is not a question of if they die, but how. The poem then elaborates on this: they must die nobly, fighting back, so their death has meaning. The title is a call to arms.
- Point 4 ("If We Must Die" - Tone Setter): The title immediately sets a serious, defiant, and courageous tone. It prepares the reader for a poem about sacrifice and resistance, which is exactly what follows, culminating in the powerful line: "Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack, / Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!"

Question: Compare and contrast how the theme of sacrifice is presented in two poems that focus on the struggle for freedom.

- (Poems: "If We Must Die" by Claude McKay & "Your Pain" by Armando Guebuza)

Key Points for Body:

- Point 1 (Sacrifice for Honor - "If We Must Die"): McKay presents sacrifice as a means to reclaim dignity and honor. Death is inevitable, but they must choose a noble death to force even their enemies to respect them.

"*If we must die, O let us nobly die, / So that our precious blood may not be shed / In vain;"*

- Point 2 (Sacrifice for Victory - "Your Pain"): Guebuza presents sacrifice as a necessary investment for tangible victory. Blood is not shed for honor alone but to "irrigate" the concrete outcome of freedom.

"My blood / Yet more your blood / Shall irrigate our victory."

- Point 3 (Contrast in Imagery): McKay uses animal imagery (hogs, dogs, pack) to depict the degrading oppression they face, making sacrifice a way to rise above it. Guebuza uses bodily imagery (pain, eyes, scars, hands, blood) to show collective suffering and strength, making sacrifice a unifying, practical action.
- Point 4 (Common Goal): Despite the difference in emphasis (honor vs. victory), both poets agree on the core principle: sacrifice is essential in the fight against a powerful oppressor. It is the highest form of commitment to the cause of liberation.

THE ROLE OF THE PERSONA

1. Choose two poems and explain the effectiveness of the poet's choice of persona in conveying the poem's message. (Suggested Poems: "Building the Nation" (The Driver) & "A Freedom Song" (The Uncle))

FIGURES OF SPEECH

1. Poets use figures of speech to create vivid imagery and emphasize their points. Illustrate this statement by referring to one figure of speech in each of two poems. (e.g., Symbolism in "The Dying Child" - Gun/Pen; Metaphor in "A Baby is a European")

SOCIAL PROTEST

1. Poetry can be a powerful tool for social protest. Demonstrate how two poets use their work to protest against social injustices in their societies. (Suggested Poems: "Ballad of the Landlord" by Langston Hughes & "Eat More" by Joe Corrie)

THE IMPACT OF COLONIALISM

1. Discuss the portrayal of the effects of colonialism and Western influence in two poems. (Suggested Poems: "A Baby is a European" (Ewe) & "Your Pain" by Armando Guebuza)

HOPELESSNESS VS HOPE

1. With reference to two poems, show how poets depict either hopelessness or hope in the face of adversity. (Suggested Poems: "The Dying Child" (Hopelessness) & "Frontline" by George Shea (Hope))

THE FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP

1. With reference to two poems, discuss how the poets portray the failure of those in positions of authority and trust. (Use: "The Awful Dentist" by Jwani Mwaikusa and "Building the Nation" by Henry Barlow)

- **Model Essay (Fix all incomplete parts, especially transitions and topic sentences)**

Leadership and authority come with the expectation of service, protection, and improvement for the community. However, when those in power fail, the consequences are dire. Poets often critique this failure to provoke thought and change. This essay will discuss the failure of authority as depicted in "The Awful Dentist" by Jwani Mwaikusa and "Building the Nation" by Henry Barlow, using the symbolic figures of a professional and a civil servant.

Betrayal of public trust. In "The Awful Dentist," the professional fails his community by betraying the trust they placed in his expertise. The people welcomed him with hope, believing his qualifications guaranteed competence. Instead, he exploits their vulnerability for his own gain, symbolizing how corrupt leaders betray the citizens who elect or hire them.

"Our teeth shall be alright!"
People chanted, welcoming his services.

The hopeful chanting of the people contrasts bitterly with the dentist's actions. He was trusted to cure and care but chose to destroy, representing leaders who campaign on promises of development but only pursue personal enrichment once in power.

Misuse of position and resources. In "Building the Nation," the Permanent Secretary (PS) fails by blatantly misusing his position and public resources. He uses a government vehicle and driver to attend a personal lunch, fraudulently classifying it as state business. This symbolizes the widespread corruption where leaders divert public funds for private luxury.

"To an important urgent function
In fact, to a luncheon at the Vic."

The irony in these lines highlights the failure. A "luncheon" is not an "urgent function," yet the PS abuses his authority to justify it. This mirrors real-life leaders who misappropriate funds meant for projects like schools and hospitals for their own entertainment.

Hypocrisy and lack of accountability. Both characters display staggering hypocrisy,refusing to acknowledge their failure. The dentist continues his work "without fear," oblivious to the future consequences of his actions. Similarly, the PS complains about fake "stomach ulcers" from his lavish lunch, equating his discomfort with the driver's genuine hunger.

"The pains we suffer in building the nation!"

The PS's statement here is the height of hypocrisy. He claims to be suffering for the nation while actively stealing from it. This reflects leaders who play the victim and celebrate non-existent achievements while the masses suffer from their poor governance.

Production of useless elites. Mwaikusa points to a deeper failure: the education system that produces such incompetent professionals. The dentist's theoretical excellence ("graduated with honours") is useless in practice, criticizing an system that prioritizes paper qualifications over practical, community-oriented skills.

"He read medicine
Specialising in the tooth,
And graduated with honours"

His honours degree is rendered meaningless by his actions. This is a critique of institutions that produce graduates who cannot solve societal problems but are excellent at exploiting them, a failure of the entire system that creates leaders.

Indifference to the suffering of others. A key failure of authority is indifference. The PS is completely indifferent to his driver's plight. He only asks about the driver's lunch after a yawn, and his concern is superficial and belated. This symbolizes the elite's disconnect from the daily struggles of ordinary citizens.

> *"Did you have any lunch friend?"*
> *I replied...*
> *That I had not, but was slimming!*

The driver's sarcastic reply underscores this indifference. The PS, consumed by his own fake struggles, is oblivious to the real suffering right in front of him, much like leaders who are out of touch with the people they serve.

Creation of a cycle of exploitation. Ultimately, both failures create a vicious cycle. The dentist's actions leave people unable to eat, making them poorer and more dependent. The PS's corruption steals resources needed for real nation-building, perpetuating poverty. Their failure is not a single act but a system that keeps the people oppressed.

> *"And they paid him with meat*
> *Which now they could not eat."*

This final irony shows the cycle of exploitation. The people pay the dentist with the very resource he has made impossible for them to use. Similarly, citizens pay taxes to leaders who misuse the funds, leaving them with no tangible services in return.

In conclusion, both Mwaikusa and Barlow effectively use their characters as archetypes of failed authority. Through the incompetent dentist and the hypocritical Permanent Secretary, they critique betrayal, corruption, hypocrisy, and indifference in leadership. Their poems serve as a powerful warning about the profound consequences when those entrusted with power fail in their duties, a lesson that remains critically relevant for society today.

THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE AND DIGNITY

1. How do two poets explore the desire for justice and human dignity in the face of oppression? Support your answer with three points from each poem. (Use: "Ballad of the Landlord" by Langston Hughes and "If We Must Die" by Claude McKay)

- **Model Essay (Fix all incomplete parts, especially transitions and topic sentences)**

The struggle for justice and dignity is a central theme in literature, especially in works addressing oppression. It is the fight to be treated fairly and to maintain one's self-respect against unjust forces. This essay will explore this struggle through the defiant tenant in "Ballad of the Landlord" by Langston Hughes and the resolute fighters in "If We Must Die" by Claude McKay.

Right to demand basic needs. In "Ballad of the Landlord," the tenant's struggle begins with a simple demand for his right to safe housing. He asks for repairs to a leaking roof and broken

steps, which are the landlord's basic responsibilities. This represents the fundamental struggle of the oppressed for their basic human needs and rights to be met.

"Landlord, landlord,
My roof has sprung a leak.
Don't you 'member I told you about it
Way last week?"

The tenant's repeated pleas show he is not asking for a luxury but for a basic standard of living. His struggle is for the justice of having a habitable home, a dignity that the oppressive landlord denies him.

The threat of violent retaliation. When his peaceful demands are met with threats of eviction, the tenant's fight for dignity turns to the threat of violence. He refuses to be dehumanized further and asserts his right to defend himself, showing that the oppressed will only be pushed so far before they resist.

"You ain't gonna be able to say a word
If I land my fist on you."

This threat is a pivotal moment. It is not a desire for violence but a desperate assertion of dignity in the face of overwhelming power. It signifies the point where peaceful pursuit of justice transforms into the need for self-defense.

Facing unjust consequences. The tenant's struggle is met with a brutal and unjust system.The landlord weaponizes the police and courts, leading to the tenant's arrest without a fair trial. This highlights how oppressive systems pervert justice to punish those who dare to demand their rights.

"Headlines in press:
MAN THREATENS LANDLORD
TENANT HELD NO BAIL
JUDGE GIVES NEGRO 90 DAYS IN COUNTRY JAIL."

These headlines represent the ultimate injustice. The tenant is vilified and punished, his story twisted by a biased system. His struggle, though defeated, exposes the corruption of the institutions meant to protect justice.

Choosing a noble death. In "If We Must Die," the struggle is framed around the choice of how to face oppression. McKay argues that true dignity lies in dying nobly while fighting back, rather than submitting to a shameful, animal-like death. This is a struggle for honor in the face of certain defeat.

"If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,"

The animal imagery ("hogs," "dogs") dehumanizes the victims. The struggle for dignity is to reject this dehumanization by meeting their fate with courage, asserting their humanity through defiant action.

The power of unified resistance. McKay emphasizes that dignity and justice are won through collective, brave action. He calls on his "kinsmen" to stand together against a common enemy, suggesting that unity is their greatest source of strength and the path to a meaningful end.

"O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,"

This call to unity transforms the struggle from an individual fight into a collective movement. It is by standing together bravely that they can claim their dignity and force even their enemies to honor them.

Legacy and honor. The ultimate goal of the struggle in McKay's poem is to secure a legacy of honor. Even in death, their resistance will have meaning. Their blood will not be shed "in vain," and their sacrifice will become a symbol of righteous defiance for future generations.

"So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!"

This point elevates the struggle from mere physical resistance to a fight for historical memory. The justice they seek is the eternal honor that comes from dying for a noble cause, ensuring their dignity outlives their oppression.

In summary, both Hughes and McKay explore the multifaceted struggle for justice and dignity. Hughes shows a practical, everyday battle against an unjust system that ends in brutal suppression, highlighting the inequality of the fight. McKay, conversely, focuses on the philosophical and moral victory of facing oppression with unified and courageous resistance. Together, they illustrate that the demand for justice and dignity is a fundamental human impulse, whether it is for a repaired home or for honor in death.

THE PLIGHT OF THE EXPLOITED CHILD

1. Analyze the ways in which two poets depict the exploitation and suffering of children, highlighting three aspects from each poem. (Use: "A Freedom Song" by Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye and "The Dying Child" by Freeman Peter Lwamba)

- **Model Essay (Fix all incomplete parts, especially transitions and topic sentences)**

The exploitation of children is a grave social ill that robs the young of their childhood,health, and future. Poets often shed light on this injustice to evoke empathy and inspire action. This essay will analyze the depiction of a child's suffering through the relentless labour endured by Atieno in "A Freedom Song" by Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye and the devastating malnutrition suffered by the boy in "The Dying Child" by Freeman Peter Lwamba.

The burden of domestic labour. In "A Freedom Song," Atieno is exploited through excessive domestic labour from a very tender age. She is treated not as a child but as a live-in servant, responsible for arduous chores that should be performed by adults. This exploitation denies her the right to a carefree childhood.

"Atieno washes dishes,
Atieno plucks the chicken,
Atieno gets up early
Beds her sacks down in the kitchen,"

The anaphora (repetition of "Atieno") emphasizes the endless list of her duties. She has no rest and sleeps on sacks in the kitchen, highlighting her inferior status and the crushing burden of labour she is forced to bear.

Denial of education. A crucial aspect of Atieno's exploitation is the deliberate denial of education. While her uncle sends his own children to school, Atieno is kept at home to work. This ensures she remains trapped in a cycle of poverty and powerlessness, with no means to improve her future.

"Don't I keep her, school my own ones?
Pay the party, union fee
All for progress: aren't you grateful
Atieno yo?"

The uncle's rhetorical question is deeply hypocritical. He claims "progress" while actively denying it to Atieno. Educating his own children at her expense shows a calculated exploitation that secures a future for his family by destroying hers.

Neglect and Its tragic consequences. The poem shows that exploitation through neglect leads to tragedy. Unsupervised, unprotected, and desperate for a better life, Atieno becomes pregnant as a teenager. Her young body cannot handle childbirth, leading to her death from postpartum bleeding.

"Atieno's had a baby
So we know that she is bad
...Ending in a postpartum bleeding
Atieno yo."

The uncle blames her ("she is bad") for the consequences of his neglect. This reflects a common societal failure where exploited children are punished for outcomes created by the adults who failed to care for them.

The physical ravages of hunger. "The Dying Child" depicts exploitation not by an individual but by a system that allows such extreme poverty to exist. The child's body is ravaged by hunger and malnutrition, making him a visual symbol of societal neglect and failure.

"Thin and red,
Skinny and bald,
The boy groans on the ground.
Swollen stomach
Full of waste,"

This stark imagery is a powerful indictment. The "swollen stomach" is a classic sign of kwashiorkor, a protein deficiency. The child is not just thin; he is in active pain ("groans"), showing the physical torture of starvation.

The loss of future and hope. The exploitation here is the theft of the child's future. Poverty and hunger have so consumed his life that he has no future to look forward to. His own mother confirms this bleak reality, crushing any lingering hope.

"Mother," shouts the boy,
"When I grow up
I will carry a gun
And not a pen."

"My son," cries the mother
"You will never live to carry a gun
There is no meat for us."

The boy's dream of a violent future ("a gun") shows how poverty breeds desperation. The mother's heartbreaking response confirms that the system has exploited them to the point where even the possibility of a future has been extinguished.

Societal indifference. The poem highlights the ultimate aspect of exploitation: societal indifference. The child is "Fighting with flies over an empty plate," a powerful image of being completely abandoned. There is no help, no intervention—just a slow, public death met with apathy.

"As the boy
Fights with flies
Over the empty plate."

This fight with flies is a metaphor for his larger, futile struggle against poverty. The empty plate symbolizes the emptiness of promises and the absence of aid. He is exploited by a society that sees his suffering and does nothing.

In conclusion, both Macgoye and Lwamba offer devastating portraits of child exploitation. Macgoye focuses on a personal, familial exploitation through labour and neglect, leading to a tragic, preventable death. Lwamba explores a broader, systemic exploitation through poverty and societal indifference, leading to a slow, physical deterioration. Both poets force the reader to confront the grim realities faced by millions of children, serving as a powerful call to action to protect the most vulnerable members of our society.